



# COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS

In reply quote No.

EIGHTH FLOOR,  
DA COSTA BUILDING,  
68 GRENFELL STREET,  
ADELAIDE.

## DIVORCE STATISTICS 1959.

South Australia:

Bulletin No. 5 of 1960.

In this bulletin particulars are given of writs issued and orders granted for divorce, judicial separation, annulment of marriage and restitution of conjugal rights during the year 1959, with comparative data for previous years. Particulars are shown also of divorces made absolute during 1959 classified according to grounds for divorce and sex of the petitioner, classified by ages of husbands and wives at marriage, by duration of marriage and issue, and by age at the time of divorce.

### WRITS ISSUED & ORDERS GRANTED 1959

Writs issued -		Orders granted -	
For divorce	789	For divorce nisi	470
judicial separation	1	divorce absolute	503
nullity of marriage	6	judicial separation	nil
restitution of		nullity of marriage	7
conjugal rights	nil	restitution of	
		conjugal rights	nil

The following table compares particulars of writs issued and orders granted during 1959 with those of the preceding seven years:-

TABLE 1. WRITS ISSUED AND ORDERS GRANTED, SINCE 1952.

Particulars	YEARS							
	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
WRITS								
Divorce	805	921	832	824	754	767	791	789
Judicial Separation	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	1
Nullity of Marriage	5	2	6	9	15	11	5	6
Total	812	924	839	833	770	778	796	796
ORDERS								
Divorce - Nisi	596	634	654	516	613	482	537	470
Absolute	581	628	594	624	567	529	483	503
Judicial Separation	1	2	2	-	2	1	5	-
Nullity of Marriage - Nisi	8	2	7	6	14	5	10	5
Absolute	3	8	4	4	5	8	9	7
RESTITUTION OF CONJUGAL RIGHTS								
Writs	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Orders	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-

The annual number of writs issued reached a record high level in 1953 when 924 writs were issued. In subsequent years, the annual number of writs decreased steadily until 1956 when 770 writs were issued and since has risen to 796 during 1959.

The annual number of divorces absolute reached a peak in 1947 when 695 orders were granted. However, it should be noted that a rise or fall in the number of writs issued during a year does not necessarily result in a similar movement in divorces absolute in that year, because (a) the number of actions awaiting trial at the end of each year varies considerably and (b) decrees nisi cannot be made absolute for at least six months.

In Table 2A, divorces absolute and annulments of marriage are classified according to grounds.

TABLE 2A. DIVORCES ABSOLUTE AND ANNULMENTS OF MARRIAGE CLASSIFIED BY GROUNDS

Grounds for Divorce or Nullity	Year							
	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
DIVORCES ABSOLUTE								
Adultery	230	240	216	238	208	190	203	175
Desertion	252	264	248	251	239	209	190	224
Habitual Cruelty	86	107	113	113	103	111	82	90
Insanity	1	3	4	4	-	3	1	5
Drunkenness	8	10	6	9	11	9	4	4
Failure to Maintain	4	3	3	6	3	2	1	3
Other	-	1	4	3	3	5	2	2
Total	581	628	594	624	567	529	483	503
ANNULMENTS OF MARRIAGE								
Impotence	2	4	4	1	1	5	6	5
Bigamy	1	2	-	2	2	2	2	-
Invalid Marriage	-	2	-	1	2	1	1	-
Non Consummation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

In the immediate post-war period adultery was the main ground for divorce (of the 1,953 divorces absolute granted in the three years 1945 to 1947, 1,197 were for adultery compared with only 585 for desertion and 101 for habitual cruelty). Subsequently divorces for adultery have become much less frequent and since 1949 have been less than those for desertion in each year except 1958 when divorces for adultery were slightly greater in number.

In Table 2B, the figures shown in Table 2A for divorces absolute are dissected according to sex of petitioner.

TABLE 2B. DIVORCES ABSOLUTE GRANTED CLASSIFIED BY SEX OF PETITIONER AND GROUNDS.

Grounds for Divorce	Year							
	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
DIVORCES ON PETITION OF HUSBANDS								
Adultery	125	145	129	138	140	121	126	108
Desertion	116	113	124	115	117	103	88	108
Habitual Cruelty	6	4	5	7	5	6	5	-
Insanity	1	3	3	4	-	2	-	3
Drunkenness	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	1
Failure to Maintain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	2	3	1	1	1	-
Total	249	266	264	267	264	233	220	220
DIVORCES ON PETITION OF WIVES								
Adultery	105	95	87	100	68	69	77	67
Desertion	136	151	124	136	122	106	102	116
Habitual Cruelty	80	103	108	106	98	105	77	90
Insanity	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	2
Drunkenness	7	9	5	9	10	9	4	3
Failure to Maintain	4	3	3	6	3	2	1	3
Other	-	1	2	-	2	4	1	2
Total	332	362	330	357	303	296	263	283

During the years 1945 and 1946 (the first for which details of the sex of petitioners are available), the majority of divorces absolute granted were on the petition of husbands. In each subsequent year, however, there were more divorces granted on the petition of wives, and the proportion in 1959 (56.3% of the total) is fairly representative of figures for the last twelve years.

41% of divorces on petition of wives during 1959 were granted for desertion while habitual cruelty and adultery remained frequent grounds. During the same period, 98% of all divorces on the petition of husbands were on the grounds of adultery and desertion.



Table 3 shows the ages at time of marriage of husbands and wives divorced during 1959.

TABLE 3. DIVORCES ABSOLUTE CLASSIFIED BY AGE AT MARRIAGE, 1959.

Age of Husband	1959									1958
	Age of Wife									
	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45 & over	Not Stated	Total	Total
Under 20	22	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	25	19
20 - 24	91	115	18	2	-	-	-	-	226	215
25 - '29	24	70	33	12	1	2	1	-	143	144
30 - 34	2	13	16	13	1	1	-	-	46	40
35 - 39	2	5	4	8	6	1	-	-	26	33
40 - 44	1	1	2	3	5	5	1	-	18	10
45 & over	-	-	2	2	3	3	5	-	15	7
Not stated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	15
Total 1959	142	205	77	40	16	12	7	4	503	..
1958	141	210	66	22	17	7	5	15	..	483

In recent years, little more than 20% of all brides married before reaching 20 years of age. However, 142, or 28.5% of the 499 wives divorced in 1959 (whose ages at marriage are known) were under 20 years of age when married.

In Table 4, details are shown of the duration and issue (living children under 16 years) of marriages in respect of which divorces absolute were granted in the year 1959, and totals for years 1956 to 1958.

TABLE 4. DIVORCES ABSOLUTE CLASSIFIED BY DURATION OF MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

Duration of Marriage (years)	1959								1958	1957	1956
	Living Children under 16 years								Total	Total	Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 & over	Total			
0 - 4	30	9	3	-	-	-	-	42	39	59	62
5 - 9	71	58	36	10	4	1	-	180	150	179	203
10 - 14	33	23	36	20	6	-	-	118	142	125	130
15 - 19	14	20	22	19	4	1	2	82	78	79	85
20 - 24	17	8	9	5	1	-	-	40	41	42	45
25 - 29	10	6	2	-	-	-	1	19	16	23	21
30 - 34	12	2	2	-	-	-	-	16	10	16	13
35 - 39	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	3	3
40 - 44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4
45 and over	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Total 1959	193	126	110	54	15	2	3	503	..	..	..
1958	165	142	87	57	25	4	3	..	483	..	..
1957	197	146	106	53	20	5	2	..	..	529	..
1956	222	159	132	36	12	6	-	..	..	..	567

In each of the four years for which details are shown in the above table, more of the divorces granted were in the 5 to 9 year duration group than in any of the other quinquennial groups. This appears to indicate that the probability of divorce rises gradually during the first few years of marriage, and reaches a peak when the marriage has lasted between four and ten years, and thereafter declines gradually.

In the last ten years there has been an increase in the proportion of divorces which involved 2 or more living issue under the age of 16 years. In 1949 these amounted to only 19.5% of all divorces absolute, but in 1959 the corresponding percentage was 36.6%.

Table 5 sets out the ages at time of divorce of husbands and wives divorced in the years 1956 to 1959, with a cross-classification for 1959.

TABLE 5. DIVORCES CLASSIFIED BY AGE AT TIME OF DIVORCE

Age of Husband	1959								1958	1957	1956
	Age of Wife								Total	Total	Total
	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45 & over	Not Stated	Total			
Under 25	7	1	-	-	-	-	-	8	4	10	12
25 - 29	24	41	8	2	-	-	-	75	62	70	101
30 - 34	5	39	54	7	-	3	-	108	108	138	130
35 - 39	2	12	41	35	10	2	-	102	99	93	97
40 - 44	1	1	7	26	27	7	-	69	87	86	79
45 and over	-	3	3	21	29	81	-	137	108	129	144
Not Stated	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	15	3	4
Total 1959	39	97	113	91	66	93	4	503	..	..	..
1958	34	101	111	95	54	73	15	..	483	..	..
1957	46	110	127	78	73	92	3	..	..	529	..
1956	48	140	105	96	76	98	4	..	..	..	567

In each of the last four years, divorces for husbands reached a peak in the 30 - 34 year age group. This is generally as might be expected from information obtained from Table 3 (that approximately 78% of males divorced in 1959 were aged from 20 to 29 at time of marriage) and from Table 4 (that divorces are at a maximum after 5 to 9 years of marriage).

Similarly the predominance of divorces for females in the 25 - 29 and 30 - 34 age groups can be reconciled with the most common age group at time of marriage of divorced females (20 to 24 years), and the relatively high proportion of divorces after 5 to 9 years of marriage.

D.L.J. Aitchison

DEPUTY COMMONWEALTH STATISTICIAN

29th March, 1960.